

Lead a team

Source: <http://lenwilson.us/5-thing-geese-can-teach-us-about-teamwork/>

Every fall thousands of geese fly from Canada to the southern part of the United States to escape the bitterly cold Canadian winter. As soon as a flock of geese take flight from Canadian waters they quickly form a v-shape flying pattern, with one rotating goose in the center lead and all the other geese trailing behind in two close lines. Wildlife scientists have conducted extensive studies to determine why geese and other migratory birds always fly in a distinctive v-formation. They found some fascinating results:

When geese fly together, each goose provides additional lift and reduces air resistance for the goose flying behind it. Consequently, by flying together in a v-formation, scientists estimate that the whole flock can fly about 70% farther with the same amount of energy than if each goose flew alone. Geese have discovered that they can reach their destination more quickly and with less energy expended when they fly together in formation. When people work together harmoniously on teams, sharing common values and a common destination, they all arrive at the destination quicker and easier, because they are lifted up by the energy and enthusiasm of one another.

When a goose drops out of the v-formation it quickly discovers that it requires a great deal more effort and energy to fly. Consequently, that goose will quickly return to the formation to take advantage of the lifting power that comes from flying together. Sometimes people playing on teams will drop out of the group and try to accomplish goals on their own. However, like the geese, they usually discover that they miss the synergy and energy that comes when they are an active part of a cohesive team moving toward their destination, and want to return to the group.

When the goose flying in the front of the formation has to expend the most energy because it is the first to break up the flow of air that provides the additional lift for all of the geese who follow behind the leader. Consequently, when the lead goose gets tired, it drops out of the front position and moves to the rear of the formation, where the resistance is lightest, and another goose moves to the leadership position. This rotation of position happens many times in the course of the long journey to warmer climates. When a team is functioning well, various members of the team may take the leadership role for a while because of a particular expertise or experience. Consequently, on good teams, everyone has the opportunity to serve as a leader as well as a follower.

They also frequently make loud honking sounds as they fly together. Scientists speculate that this honking is their way of communicating with each other during their long flight. Similarly, when working on teams, it is exceedingly important for each team member to communicate regularly with all the other team members.

Teams frequently fall apart because of the lack of adequate communication among the various members of the team. Perhaps human teams can learn from flying flocks of geese that constant communication among members is exceedingly important in moving effectively towards a common destination.

Scientists also discovered that when one goose becomes ill, is shot or injured, and drops out of the formation, two other geese will fall out of formation and remain with the weakened goose. They will stay with and protect the injured goose from predators until it is able to fly again or dies. Likewise, human teams work best when they do more than just work together, but care for the well being of each other.